

There Is No Peace Without Peace With God

Galatians 5:22; Romans 5:1

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Peace. What a glorious word and what a sought-after condition of heart and mind by the world. What will nations pay in order to secure the peace of their nation through diplomacy and through military might? What will companies pay in order to secure the peaceful relations of administration and workers within their companies? What will couples pay in order to move beyond hostility in their relationships with one another to being able to work together to accomplish common goals? What will individuals pay to drown out the guilt, the torment, the pain in their lives with the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol and regular visits to therapists? Needless to say, billions upon billions (perhaps trillions) of dollars will be spent in order to seek after some semblance of peace in nations, companies, families, and individual lives. And yet the Lord Jesus (whom Scripture calls “the Prince of Peace” in Isaiah 9:6) comforts all those who come to Him alone by faith alone with these words: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

This is true peace that the world cannot give, and it is here promised (by Jesus who cannot lie). You cannot buy it with money or with acts of righteousness on your part, for it has already been purchased by Christ for all who trust alone in Christ alone for their justification before God. It must be received as a free gift through Christ alone. There is no other source of true, everlasting peace than in the God who created us and has saved us from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin. He is “the God of peace” (Hebrews 13:20), and the good news of Jesus Christ is “the gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15). That is why the church father, Augustine,

could say: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless, until it finds its rest in thee” (*Confessions*, Book I, I:I).

Have you been searching for peace, dear one? Your search for peace comes to an end when it is found in the Prince of peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, even Christians struggle with discord, restlessness, and fears, all which disrupt the fruit of peace within our lives, but the Christian knows and grows in fleeing throughout the day to Christ, the Prince of peace, who alone can bring peace where discord, restlessness, and fear have invaded our heart and mind. The believer has the fruit of peace implanted in his/her heart at regeneration, and has access to the source of peace (the God who has created us and has saved us), whereas the unbeliever has only external Band-Aids to use, when what is needed is a new heart—a heart transplant by the Spirit of God—and a new life—in passing from the being the enemies of God to being the friends of God through faith alone in Christ alone.

This Lord’s Day, we begin our consideration of the next Fruit of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22: Peace. There is a natural progression thus far in the order of the Fruit of the Spirit. For as you come to know and to practice the love of Christ in your life, you will find a joy and delight in the God who has loved you from eternity, which will in turn bring a glorious peace, that all is well with you—regardless of what may be going on all around you, all is well, for God is your Lover, and your joy and delight is ever in Him.

The main points of the sermon this Lord’s Day are the following: (1) The Nature Of Peace In General (Galatians 5:22); (2) Peace With God In Particular (Romans 5:1).

I. The Nature Of Peace In General (Galatians 5:22).

A. When we read in Galatians 5:22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE”, the Greek word for “peace”, *eirene*, is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word for peace in the Old Testament, *shalom*. Now *shalom* speaks of that which is whole, rather than that which is divided and separated.

1. For example, we find the adjective form of *shalom* used in Joshua 8:31 to refer to “whole [*shalem*] stones” that are to be used to build God’s altar, rather than divided, broken, or chiseled stones. Likewise in Ruth 2:12, the reward that Boaz prayed that Ruth would receive was a “full [*shalem*] reward”, i.e. a whole and undivided reward, not a partial reward.

2. Thus, at the very root of the concept of biblical peace is the presence of wholeness, completeness, and harmony. Biblical peace is not merely a negative idea—the negation or absence of conflict and war. How many nations, marriages, and relationships may call for the temporary cessation of outward hostilities or a short-term truce and raising of a white flag, but inwardly the anger, hatred, malice, resentment, and enmity yet burns? Sometimes it is necessary to separate ourselves from conflict, but that is not what is truly needed: Peace (reconciliation). For you see, biblical peace has in view a reconciliation of the opposing parties in removing the enmity that divided and separated them, so that they are no longer divided, but are now whole and at peace (Ephesians 2:13-15). That is the essence of biblical peace—the removal of enmity so that there is a reconciliation and wholeness that leaves discord, restlessness, and fear behind. Isn’t that what is needed in our relationship with God and with others? Absolutely!

B. There is one more aspect about the nature of peace that I would like to discuss before moving on to the next main point. Peace may be understood as directed three ways: (1) Peace with God (Romans 5:1);

(2) Peace within (Philippians 4:7); and (3) Peace with others (Romans 12:18)—in other words, there is an upward peace, an inward peace, and an outward peace. This is not to say that there are three different kinds of biblical peace, but rather to say that the one biblical peace has three directions that it will take. We will be considering each of these aspects or directions of biblical peace in future sermons, and will now turn our attention to the first and foundational aspect of biblical peace: peace with God.

II. Peace With God In Particular (Romans 5:1).

A. Dear ones, there will be no true peace within your heart or with others where there is no peace with God. If we are at war with God, and He is at war with us, nothing else in this world will bring peace to our lives and relationships with others. We will find that we live in a constant state of restlessness, discord, and fears. There are two questions we want to answer in the remaining time we have this Lord's Day: (1) What is peace with God? And (2) How is peace with God realized?

1. What is peace with God?

a. First, peace with God is the perpetual, unchangeable, and everlasting state in which the enmity of our sin against God (the guilt of our sin in Adam's first transgression, the guilt of our sinful nature inherited from Adam, and the guilt of our personal transgressions of God's Law) is forever removed by God as our righteous Judge, and we are declared righteous in His sight so that we are no longer viewed (or ever viewed in the future) by God as being His enemies, but are viewed as being His friends forever. Whereas we were once the children of wrath by nature, enemies of God due to our transgression of God's righteous Law, and awaiting the sentence of death and hell (which we justly deserved), God through His infinite love and grace, has taken the initiative to remove all these barriers that divided and separated us as an

infinite chasm from Him (which we could not remove due to our own sin), and He has reconciled Himself to us in peace, and has brought us unto Himself in peace through Jesus Christ.

b. Second, this peace with God is an objective, judicial peace settled forever before the righteous tribunal of God as Judge. This peace with God is not the subjective, experiential peace within (that we will consider in a future sermon), but is the unchangeable legal, judicial peace accomplished through the vicarious, substitutionary work of Christ and the imputed righteousness of Christ in our justification by faith alone in Christ alone. Whereas the fruit of the Spirit of peace that is worked within our hearts at regeneration is subject to the changing circumstances of life and is affected by our own personal sins (so that it grows or is stunted in growth in any particular circumstance depending upon whether we are leaning upon the Prince of Peace or not at that point in time, or walking in loving obedience to His good commands or not), that is not true of our peace with God. It is objectively true regardless of what we may experience, because God having reconciled us to Himself through the finished work of Christ will never be unreconciled to us again, for that reconciled state is not dependent upon you or me, but is dependent upon Christ, upon Christ's righteousness and obedience, upon Christ's acceptance before the Father, upon the peace that Christ has with the Father. Christ's peace with the Father would first have to be destroyed before the believer's peace with God could be destroyed. And because the former cannot happen (and is unimaginable, yea even blasphemous), the latter likewise can never happen.

2. **How is peace with God realized?**

a. How do we know that our peace with God is unchangeable, unalterable, and objectively and legally true? Because it is dependent upon the immutable and judicial act of God's justification of the believing sinner (who trusts not in any work performed by him/her or any grace worked within him/her). Notice the unbreakable relationship

between our justification before God and our peace with God in Romans 5:1: **“Therefore being justified by faith** [Therefore implies all that Paul has stated in Romans 1-4—the tense of the participial phrase indicates that it is a declaration and determination that has already been determined before the judgment seat of God through trusting in Christ and His righteousness alone], **we have** [as a present and ongoing state/position before God] **peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ** [we are reconciled from being God’s enemies to being God’s friends through the all-sufficient, perfectly completed work of Jesus Christ on our behalf]. In other words, because our justification before God is unalterable now and for all eternity, then our peace with God is also unalterable now and for all eternity; for our peace with God is absolutely dependent upon our justification before God.

b. Dear ones, the Lord declares through His prophet, Isaiah: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21). Why? Because the unforgiven sins of the wicked yet make them the enemies of God and yet make God their enemy. We are all conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), and all fall short of the glory of God due to our transgressions of God’s righteous and good Law (Romans 3:23). We are estranged from God as enemies from even the womb (Psalm 58:3), and therefore the righteous sentence of God’s holy wrath and condemnation rested upon us all (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 6:23).

(1) No doubt there were Jews who looked down their noses at the Gentiles as “sinners” and themselves as “saints”. However, Paul makes it abundantly clear that “all the world” (which includes both Jews and Gentiles) stands guilty as sinful lawbreakers before the righteous throne of the most holy God (Romans 3:10-12,19).

(2) Dear ones, that’s my problem and that’s your problem as well. We’re all sinners. We cannot look down our noses at those who are sodomites, adulterers, murderers, idolaters, covenant breakers or Sabbath breakers as if we (by nature) are better than they.

We too have broken in many different ways the same holy commandments (if not outwardly then inwardly); we too have sinned in Adam; we too have forfeited that original righteousness that Adam had at creation; we too have a corrupt and polluted nature that we have inherited from Adam; and because of this, we too deserve everlasting condemnation. That is the reason why there is no true biblical peace to the wicked in this life—he/she is at war with God and a rebel/enemy against His righteous laws. This is where a true peace with God must begin, or there will never be a true peace of God within your life or mine or a true peace with others.

c. But God purposing from all eternity to glorify His love, grace, and mercy to ungodly, wicked enemies and rebels that were justly condemned by God and simply awaited Judgment Day sent His Only Begotten Son to redeem those chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began—they deserved the judgment of hell as much as those who will actually spend all eternity in hell.

(1) There was nothing in God's elect that compelled Him to choose them—He chose them because He loved them (and not because they were loveable). And Christ suffered in their place, the righteous for the unrighteous, suffering for their sin (which is the reason God forgives all the sins of the believer), and imputing/crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to the believer, so that he/she is now not only forgiven and has a clean slate before the judgment seat of God, but also is positively righteous before the judgment seat of God now and for all eternity ("just as if I'd never sinned" is lacking). Imputation means that God accounts us as righteous because of the righteousness of our Mediator.

(2) These acts by God in our justification are all judicial and objective in nature, not subjective and experiential. They occur in the court of heaven before God's judgment seat and not in the heart of man. It is our sanctification that is subjective—it is the bearing of

fruit within our own hearts and exhibiting it to others that is subjective and experiential. The objective sentence of God in heaven is not subject to changes or alteration, because God only and always looks upon Christ as our Pardon and as our Righteousness; whereas the subjective experience of the one who trusts alone in Christ alone for his/her justification is in the process of being sanctified and conformed in his/her nature to what is true in his/her justification. Conformity in our sanctification to what is true in our justification will not occur until we are glorified (“he [God] also did predestinate [those who are effectually called] to be conformed to the image of his Son” Romans 8:29).

d. The only means by which God justifies us (declares us righteous) is by faith alone in Christ alone. Faith is looking outside and away from yourself to Christ alone and then resting alone in what He has accomplished for you, a helpless and undeserving sinner. Faith is like an eye. An eye does not eye itself, it eyes (or sees) that which is outside itself. So likewise does faith in eyeing and looking to Christ alone.

B. Various heresies abound that would pervert the Scriptural truth of justification, which then destroy our peace with God. These heresies have arisen within Romanism, Arminianism, and movements identified as The Emerging Church, The New Perspective On Paul, and Federal Vision.

1. The Scripture condemns the error that justifying faith involves our faithfulness or good works. It is true that at times the word “faith” may be used to mean “faithfulness” as in Romans 3:3 (where it refers to the faithfulness of God). However, saving faith as the alone instrument in justification is contrasted with good works that we may perform in faithfulness to God and God’s Law (Philippians 3:9). Faith in the abstract is an act of obedience. However, saving faith as an instrument in justification is not working, but simply receiving what has been already worked by Christ for the believing sinner.

2. The Scripture condemns the error that teaches there is a justification by faith in Christ at the time of conversion, but also a justification by works at the Final Judgment. This heresy promotes the idea that our justification on the basis of Christ's righteousness is not ultimately sufficient or complete, but that we must likewise be justified before God by our works at the Final Judgment. Dear ones, we are not justified before God at the Final Judgment. It is true that our works will be judged, but not in order that we might be justified. For, dear ones, even before God judges our works, He separates the sheep (those who are justified) from the goats (those who are not justified) in Matthew 25:32-33. Only after those who are justified are separated from those who not justified are their works judged as we see in Matthew 25:34ff. The good works of those who are justified provide evidence of their already accomplished justification and faith alone in Christ alone and His perfect righteousness. Nor does James (James 2:21) contradict Paul (Romans 3:28). Paul is addressing legalists. James is addressing antinomians. Paul speaks of our justification in the sight of God. James speaks of our justification in the sight of men (whereby we manifest our justification before man by our works of loving obedience gives testimony to our justification before God by faith alone).

3. The Scripture condemns the error that teaches that justification does not guarantee perseverance in the one who is imputed the righteousness of Christ by faith alone. This heresy arises from the false belief that justification is not complete at conversion, but is rather on-going, and is finally complete when it is declared at the final judgment. However, the justification taught in Scripture immediately transfers one from death into everlasting life, so that the one who is justified cannot come into condemnation (John 5:24). It is the Father's will that none who are justified be cast out or lost (John 6:37-39). No charge against those who are justified can be laid at the feet of God so

that it alters or changes their status as righteous before God (Romans 8:33-34).

Dear ones, the gospel of free grace is offered to sinners who deserve only the undiluted wrath of God. God justifies only sinners not saints. But all sinners that He justifies, He does make saints (that is, He begins to make them holy gradually through this life and to make them perfectly holy at death). Justification by faith alone was the biblical doctrine that set Martin Luther free from the bondage of fear and restlessness in never knowing if he had done enough to earn the favor, the love, and the righteousness of God. For if our justification depends upon us, there must be a perfect righteousness—but Luther knew he could never be perfectly righteous regardless of his efforts. Thus, he was brought in his desperation by God to see that “the just shall live by faith” in Jesus Christ, and that faith in Jesus Christ will be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit growing in his heart, speech, and conduct.

Dear ones, you are not disqualified in coming to Christ by faith by your sin, or ungodliness, or even by being the chief of sinners. You are, however, disqualified if you do not yet understand that you are a sinner, a rebel, and enemy of God who deserves His everlasting condemnation in hell (Luke 18:9-14). Peace within your heart and with others, must begin with peace with God. Where are you looking for peace? In things, in money, in people, in yourself, in health, in alcohol or drugs, in your talents and abilities, or in your obedience to God’s commandments? “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

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